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Thursday, 7 July 2016, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Bessho	(Japan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gimolieca
	China	Mr. Xu Zhongsheng
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. Taula
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Mr. Pressman
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/579)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2016/579)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/579, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I wish to warmly welcome the Deputy Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, and I give him the floor.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I am here today to convey the Secretary-General's, and my own, concerns about the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Political tensions are increasing ahead of the constitutionally envisaged presidential and legislative elections. Polarization and public discontent are being fuelled by delays in the electoral process, a debate around respect for the Constitution and increasing restrictions on democratic space.

The political dialogue proposed by President Kabila Kabange is facing uncertainty. The ruling majority and the opposition have expressed their support in principle. However, there is no agreement on the terms under which the dialogue should be held or who should participate in it. President Kabila Kabange reiterated the need for dialogue during his address to the nation on 30 June, while also urging the Facilitator of the African Union, former Togolese Prime Minister Edem Kodjo, to take steps to launch the dialogue as soon as possible. Important members of the opposition continue to express reservations. They argue that the dialogue proposed by President Kabila Kabange could lead to the extension of his term in office beyond November 2016. The efforts of Facilitator Kodjo, who is supported by Special Representative Maman Sidikou and Special Envoy Said Djinnit, have not yet bridged that gap. In the absence of dialogue, there is a real risk that political actors could resort to unilateral decisions, which may compound existing political tensions.

An inclusive and credible dialogue among Congolese stakeholders is the only realistic way to defuse political tensions, overcome the electoral impasse and prevent violence. Such a dialogue should result in an inclusive agreement that could lead to credible presidential and legislative elections. Without it, we face the risk of a severe crisis, with a high probability of violence and persistent instability. This tragic and still preventable outcome would not only reverse the political, security and development gains of the past few years, it would also require a response that would go beyond the capacity of United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I therefore need to convey the Secretary-General's serious call for all Congolese political stakeholders to give dialogue a chance, engage in good faith and place the interests of their nation first.

I would like to draw attention to three elements that could support an inclusive dialogue.

First, as proposed by the African Union, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the United Nations in their joint communiqué of 6 June, the International Support Group for the facilitation efforts to Mr. Kodjo could make an important contribution to build confidence in the process. I welcome the Group's inaugural meeting, held in Addis Ababa on 4 July. The Support Group reaffirmed the crucial importance of holding a successful national dialogue with all Congolese stakeholders, preferably by the end of July, and agreed to undertake consultations aimed at encouraging all stakeholders to participate in it.

Secondly, a reliable voter register could help defuse tensions and pave the way for transparent and credible elections. MONUSCO is providing technical assistance and logistical support for the revision of the register.

Thirdly, as called for by the Council, MONUSCO has updated its plans to address security risks and to monitor human rights violations and abuses in the context of the elections. The protection of civilians will, and must, remain a key priority of the Mission, including in the context of the electoral process. I should note, however, that in the case of a major security crisis, it would be unrealistic to expect MONUSCO to substitute for the State.

In the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular in a number of territories in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, the security situation remains extremely serious. There is reason to be particularly concerned about the situation in Beni, where the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have carried out deadly attacks against defenceless civilians, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and MONUSCO. We are also concerned about inter-communal tensions and violence in the Lubero and Walikale territories in North Kivu.

The resumption of active military cooperation between the FARDC and MONUSCO in operations against the ADF and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda in North Kivu is encouraging. It is helping to address the threat that armed groups pose to the civilian population in the eastern part of the country. Ultimately, the threat posed by armed groups, which is exacerbated by underlying social, economic and political problems, can be addressed only through a combination of military pressure and political measures.

Significant progress has been achieved in stabilizing the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To preserve those gains, political leaders must listen to the aspirations of their people, who have suffered for far too long from continued political crisis and violent conflict. Dialogue, respect for the rule of law and human rights and democratic participation and practices are the best way to prevent continuing violence and suffering.

I count on the Security Council to give its full and steadfast support to dialogue and for the strengthening of democratic practices in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At stake here, basically, is the long-term stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — and Council members are aware of the size and importance of that nation — and also of the entire Great Lakes region.

The international community and the United Nations have invested heavily in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We must preserve and build on the progress made. There is growing recognition at the global level of the importance of political leadership in preventing and mitigating crisis — we discuss that all the time. But in the Democratic Republic of the Congo it is time to move from discussions and intentions to action.

The international community and Member States must now proactively engage with all parties to diffuse tensions and point towards a path to the dialogue, which is so vital and urgent. The leadership of the Council is critical, and the Secretary-General and I, and all of our colleagues, are there to do everything that we can to prevent things from turning worse.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to congratualte your country, Japan, on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of July and to express my delegation's delight at seeing you conduct the Council's deliberations. Allow me also to express my delegation's gratitude to Mr. François Delattre, Permanent Representative of the French Republic to the United Nations, for the skill with which he presided over the Council's proceedings in June. Lastly, I would like to pay well-deserved tribute to His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his outstanding ongoing efforts to restore peace in my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My delegation has taken note of the report (S/2016/579) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and duly appreciates its value. Although the Council takes note of the responses my Government has always provided on many of the issues raised in his reports, in order to further our understanding, my delegation believes it is necessary to briefly reconsider them. In that regard, please allow me in particular to focus on the state of progress in the electoral process, which is the main issue to which the other issues are linked,

notably the political dialogue and what the report refers to as diminishing political space.

It is true that there have been delays in the electoral process. The reasons for that have been sufficiently discussed in our various interventions before the Council, as well as by my country's Foreign Minister and by me. It therefore seems to me untimely to revisit them here. But what is important and deserves the Council's attention is that, as we have always said, our country is determined to organize free elections that respect all international standards of inclusiveness, transparency and credibility, in a calm atmosphere, in order to safeguard the hard-won peace. My country's determination was reaffirmed by the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange. Just two weeks ago, in Kalemie in Tanganyika province and in Kindu in Maniema province, he reassured the Congolese people that elections would take place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and called on them to register on a large scale as soon as the registration process began.

Similarly, the National Independent Electoral Commission, the technical body constitutionally empowered to organize elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has started testing registration kits in Kinshasa and Matadi in Kongo Central province with a view to updating and ensuring the reliability of the electoral registry. Given the positive results, the Commission launched the registration process in July, starting in Nord-Ubangi province. In order to allow the Congolese people time to become familiar with the process, the Commission has begun an awareness-raising campaign starting in Bas-Uélé province.

Moreover, as we have always emphasized, in order to ensure peaceful elections, overcome obstacles in the way of the process and prevent any post-election crisis, it is necessary or organize an inclusive national political dialogue. In view of the time needed and for the sake of saving time, in his address to the nation on 30 June the Head of State called on the Facilitator to make haste in order to start the work this month.

My Government thanks the African Union, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the United Nations, which are supporting the dialogue and have underscored its importance. However, as we have already indicated, the inclusive national political dialogue that we are all calling for must first and foremost be a Congolese undertaking, who must learn to talk to each other as happens everywhere else. As for the partners and friends of my country, their role is to help us in conducting a successful dialogue that leads to consensus among our country's entire political class.

My delegation thinks it is useful here to return to point made about diminishing political space. It seems to us that none of the explanations that we have provided to date on the issue have led to any effort to correct the false perception associated with the matter in the context of international opinion. We therefore wonder if the campaign behind all of that, which offers no objective information on the subject, has not been created for the purpose of gratuitously discrediting our institutions. Nevertheless, the truth is that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo the political space is more open than anywhere else in the region, as visitors to our country and those who live there can confirm. In fact, we have more than 400 political parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and hundreds of private radio stations and television channels, which freely set their editorial opinion. Many of them belong to opposition political actors. Moreover, those radio and television stations often spend most of their time criticizing public institutions and even the Head of State, and they do so openly and without hindrance.

My delegation draws the Council's attention to the fact that the criticisms levelled against my country often are not justified, because, as everyone knows, in any State governed by the rule of law, the primacy of the law and the equality of all people before it are essentially the rule. Public freedoms must be exercised according to the law and while respecting the requirements of public order. The State is a guarantor of the freedoms and rights of all and has the duty to ensure that this is so. The enjoyment of one's rights and freedoms is not something that can be used to justify defiance of the protective legal arsenal of the rights and safety of all with impunity. Hence, when necessary, as with the rule of law anywhere, courts and tribunals can intervene to punish offenses when they are committed. My country has never deviated from this principle.

Belonging to the opposition or to the majority, or any other body in the country, does not exonerate someone who breaks the law. For a country like ours, whose people have suffered greatly on account of the impunity of those who enjoy privileges because of their status or social standing, being complacent in this area does not help to strengthen democracy.

My delegation welcomes the progress made under the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement programme. Nevertheless, we remind the Council that the process has so far benefited from only the support of our Government. It would be desirable if the partners who promised to contribute to it were to do so in order to enable the continuation of operations with a view to their completion.

Lastly, my delegation welcomes the resumption of cooperation between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the context of the fight against the negative forces and armed groups. We hope that this cooperation will enable us to quickly put an end to the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda in order to focus all efforts on the Allied Democratic Forces with a view to making the region of Beni and the few communities that still suffer from the presence of armed groups completely safe.

I cannot conclude without expressing the gratitude of my Government to Mr. Maman Sambo Sidikou, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mr. Said Djinnit, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa, for their commitment and their dedication to the cause of my country and the Great Lakes region. My Government also thanks the States that have contributed troops, in particular those that are part of the Intervention Brigade. Once again, on behalf of my country, I thank all members of the Security Council.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.25 p.m.